

Meeting Notes



Downtown Action Team

October 13, 2004

8:00 a.m.

The Loft at the Mill

800 P Street

<i>Members Present</i>	Jon Camp Jim Fram (absent) Lynnie Green (absent) Matt Harris (absent) Deb Johnson Jessica Kennedy Dan Massoth Lori McClug	Annette McRoy Sachit Nadkarni (absent) Will Scott Kent Seacrest Nader Sepahpur Mike Sisk (absent) Clay Smith	Cecil Steward Jane Stricker Ed Swotek Becky Van de Bogart (absent) Michelle Waite Jon Weinberg Terry Werner
<i>Others Present</i>	Brenda Bergman Tom Brennan David Cary Jeff Cole Carol Connor Tad Fraizer Karl Fredrickson	Brandon Garrett Jason Graf Barbara Hansen Ann Harrell Marvin Krout Bill Lee Dallas McGee	Polly McMullen Kent Morgan Lynnette Nelson Brian Praeuner Marc Wullschleger Michele Abendroth

Jon Weinberg opened the meeting at 8:07 a.m. He asked the members of the Downtown Action Team to introduce themselves.

George Crandall of Crandall Arambula briefly reviewed the presentation from the Downtown Community Workshop the previous evening. Participants at the workshop were asked to complete a survey of concerns they want to see addressed in Downtown. The results were tallied and indicated that retail was a major concern followed by pedestrian/bike issues.

Mr. Crandall then introduced Bill Lee of Economics Research Associates. Mr. Lee stated that overall space in downtown has increased over the last 15 years, but retail space has declined. Future demand shows that the economy will have steady growth. The forecast over the 20 years shows that office demand will increase. Housing demand has been fairly steady. Hotel and retail demand should increase.

Mr. Lee continued by noting the three prong retail strategy. These strategies are to build off Haymarket Square by creating restaurant and specialty shops along P and 8th, to create a neighborhood market place which serves downtown employees and the new neighborhood, and to build a town center with new anchors and smaller street-front shops.

Mr. Crandall continued by stating that determining the location of the retail and entertainment district is key. Traffic volume on O Street is high, so they feel that is not the primary retail focus

as it is not pedestrian friendly. P Street has more acceptable traffic volumes in terms of being pedestrian friendly, so they will focus on P Street as a retail corridor. The Haymarket is the other restaurant/entertainment district. The area between 9th and 10th Streets would serve as the neighborhood center. One of the big issues is how to connect the restaurant/entertainment district with the retail area.

In terms of open space, they have suggested a network of open space. On Centennial Mall, they have suggested that it could be simplified and should go back to its historic origin.

They also presented some ideas at the workshop about a civic square at three possible locations.

Tom Brennan of Nelson Nygaard stated that one problem of the transit system is that there is a mass of activity which can be confusing. They are proposing to create a new downtown transfer location and a shuttle system to connect some of the key areas. Shuttle A serves the University. Shuttle B serves the city/county government and south neighborhoods.

Mr. Brennan stated that they have looked at a couple concepts for bike lanes. One is a local street concept, which would put bike lanes on lower volume streets and connect the off-street paths. They proposed M & N Streets for the east-west location and 11th & 12th for the north-south links. The second concept is an arterial option. This would appeal more to the hard-core cyclists. It propose lanes on some of the major arterials, such as 9th, 10th, K, L, and O Streets. They expect the solution will be a compromise of the two concepts.

Mr. Crandall then briefly reviewed the results of the ballot sheets from the workshop the previous evening. One of the ballot questions dealt with the downtown being able to accommodate the growth potential based on 600,000 square feet, 101 respondents said 'yes', 1 said 'no', and 3 said 'other'. There was also overwhelming consensus on P Street being the primary retail district, O Street being the secondary retail district, and the Haymarket being the restaurant/entertainment district.

On the location of the Civic Square, the ballot results showed that 58 prefer the location to be 13th and P Streets, 17 prefer 13th and O Streets, 18 prefer 15th and M Streets, and there were 17 in the 'other' category.

In terms of park blocks, with respect to M Street park blocks, 75 respondents said 'yes', 12 'no', and 1 'other'. On Centennial Mall, 6 said 'existing', 50 said 'upgrade', 53 said 'park blocks', and 0 said 'other'.

Regarding the Civic/Cultural question, 94 respondents said 'yes' and 4 said 'no' to the 12th Streets Arts Corridor. On the convention center east of Cornhusker Hotel, 69 said 'yes', 19 'no' and 16 said 'other'.

On the Employment issue, 95 respondents said 'yes', 8 said 'no', and 2 said 'other' to being able to accommodate te office growth potential of 2.3 million square feet.

On housing in the 'new south of Haymarket district', 90 respondents said 'yes' and 4 said 'no'.

On housing in the ‘new Antelope Valley/University district’, 90 said ‘yes’ and 6 said ‘no’.

On the transit system, 77 respondents said ‘yes’, 4 said ‘no’ and 6 said ‘other’ on Shuttle Route A. On Shuttle Route B, 74 said ‘yes’, 5 said ‘no’ and 7 said ‘other’. On the future streetcar route, 82 respondents said ‘yes’, 16 said ‘no’ and 6 said ‘other’.

On the issue of bicycles, 68 respondents preferred the ‘local street option’ and 30 preferred the ‘arterial option’. The off-street loop was very popular with 83 saying ‘yes’ and 13 saying ‘no’.

On the potential arena sites, 50 respondents preferred ‘north of Haymarket’, 11 preferred ‘south of Haymarket’ and there were 52 in the ‘other’ category.

Mr. Crandall stated that it was suggested to place the convention center in the Haymarket area in the railyard as well as the hotel which would serve the convention center. He feels this suggestion has merit, because the convention center would be next to the entertainment/restaurant district. Mr. Lee stated that he agrees with locating the convention center/arena on the edge.

Jon Camp asked about available space and how to facilitate the operation and maintenance of the space. Mr. Crandall responded that they looked to see if they had adequate space to accommodate the projections, and they determined there is. The one area lacking is the retail space. There is ample space for housing. They have located office space in the most appropriate locations, and there is adequate space for it. In terms of operation and maintenance, they will develop a list of public expenditures that are needed to make this happen, and they will connect that to the development that may be stimulated because of it.

Mr. Lee commented that the toughest part of the plan is the retail strategy, but the benefit is fairly broad throughout downtown.

Mr. Crandall stated that one of the biggest advantages is the new multi-plex theater which will bring in many visitors.

Deb Johnson stated that she serves on the City’s Events Team, which feels strongly that the major events stay off major bus routes. They also want events to stay in the core of the City. She feels this is important to keep in mind so that the location of the events will fit with the City.

Terry Werner stated that 15 & Q provides connectivity from the University to downtown as well as to the Haymarket and Antelope Valley. He feels the other locations do not provide enough space.

Ms. Johnson noted that there is a state statute that says you cannot sell alcohol within 150 feet of a school or church, and the church and University are right there.

Jon Camp stated that they will need to think outside the box and recognize that we can have responsible hospitality events.

Kent Seacrest noted that the statute defines the boundary of the University campus at R Street.

Clay Smith asked the consultants for some ideas on how to redevelop blocks that are 300 x 300 and asked if they could provide some examples at the next meeting.

Jessica Kennedy stated that housing is on the outskirts but the retail is in the core. She asked for the reasoning behind that strategy. Mr. Crandall stated that they would like to see housing interspersed throughout the downtown. The areas identified are the primary uses of that particular area.

Ed Swotek commented that many other communities have visionary focal points, and asked what Lincoln's focal point is. Mr. Crandall stated that there is not one yet, but they are developing one in the green space. Mr. Lee stated that in his experience, great cities have a series of great ideas, not just one big idea. Mr. Crandall added that there needs to be a center, which is usually open space.

Cecil Steward commented that the big idea is not here. He would like this plan to be more visionary and more bold. He would like Lincoln to be known not only for the University and the capitol, but for the quality of life of its heart. He believes there is an opportunity that is more than residential, commercial and retail zoning. The event center has to be significant enough to work. Maybe that is reason enough to not have retail on P Street. He then asked if there was going to be a traffic analysis of the entire downtown. Mr. Crandall stated that they will do an analysis to see if they can support the recommendations. Mr. Crandall noted the fact that most successful retail districts are two way streets, which does not fit with P Street.

Mr. Steward then asked if they will recommend mixed uses in the new residential districts. Mr. Crandall stated that they always encourage mixed use.

Mr. Smith stated that in terms of the big idea, he thinks of the other activities that are going on in the community. There may be an opportunity to capture the green space and bring those into the community in a constructive way.

Mr. Werner asked the consultants what pulls people from the office spaces into the retail areas. Mr. Crandall stated that good streets will pull people in. Mr. Werner then asked if there will be any recommendations on the architectural style for the buildings. Mr. Crandall stated that there will be architectural guidelines to emphasize the uniqueness of Lincoln.

Michelle Waite stated that she likes the plan and does not see any problems with it. She sees the potential for future partnerships with the University. She added that she likes the idea of the shuttle loop that goes in the heart of campus.

Will Scott stated that other similar sized communities have a centrally located green space. He then asked how important a convention center/arena is and how big it should be. Mr. Crandall responded that the suggestion of the convention center being more than 30,000 square feet is a good one. A great deal of market research has been done to support this recommendation.

Clay Smith stated that there are design standards for the Antelope Valley project that will impact the fringes of this zone and encouraged the consultants to review that issue.

Ms. Johnson would like to encourage the consultants to ensure that the transit system is connected to the convention center/arena.

Jon Weinberg asked each of the members of the DAT to share any final comments or thoughts they have.

Mr. Swotek stated that he would like future leaders of the community to look back at this process and be impressed with the vision of the plan.

Dan Massoth stated that the Haymarket district should encourage restaurant use. Most of the recommendations are long-term, and we need to consider a short-term solution to get more people in the Haymarket.

Clay Smith complimented the team on listening and interpreting the suggestions. The idea of the trolley system on P and Q Streets is interesting. He encouraged the consultants to continue to search for the big idea to make a long-term impact.

Ms. Waite complimented the team on their insight. She understands the notion of the big idea, but there is a lot of political reality in making changes. On the other hand, we need to view this as an opportunity for the future, and we should not necessarily let that limit us.

Nader Sepahpur stated that it is important to draw families into downtown.

Mr. Steward stated that the consultants have done a good job in putting these ideas together in a short amount of time. He would like this plan to have as much impact as possible on the very real political realities. He believes that mixed-use housing will cause the downtown to come alive.

Mr. Weinberg stated that we need to look at how retail will function in downtown, so this doesn't come off as another retail plan.

Mr. Seacrest stated that he is excited about these concepts and is excited to see how we go to the next level. He believes there has to be a paradigm shift in downtown. Parking is a concern, and it will be interesting to see how it interplays. He feels this is a good land use plan. Implementation is the next step.

Ms. Kennedy stated that the plan is great and will fit a lot of different lifestyles.

Mr. Scott stated that he is also excited about this plan. We need to incorporate all the ideas and look at the big picture.

Mr. Camp believes that implementation is important, and the process needs to involve the big dollar players. He would also like to see a shuttle system in downtown.

Annette McRoy stated that she is excited about the overall vision. We need to coordinate this plan with the Antelope Valley plan. She is also intrigued by the proposed location of the arena/convention center.

Mr. Werner praised the consultants on the good job they have done. He believes the civic center is very important and would be a huge draw to the downtown . He has a concern with the connectivity. Architecture is also important. He also wants the area to be walkable and bikeable.

Jon Weinberg adjourned the meeting at 9:49 a.m.

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